

## CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for inspecting rail equipment and storing information relating to the inspection comprising:

5 providing rail equipment having a plurality of parts;  
inspecting the rail equipment to determine the condition of the parts of the rail equipment;

providing a data entry system for recording the condition of the parts of the rail equipment wherein the data entry system comprises a plurality of fields for entering  
10 information related to condition of the rail equipment;

inputting the information into the data entry system;

generating reports related to a condition of the rail equipment that is calculated from the information input into the data entry system; and

providing a database interconnected with the data entry system for storing  
15 information input into the data entry system or generated by the data entry system.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the reports comprise information relating to an estimated cost of repair of the rail equipment.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the data entry system stores information relating to a plurality of types of railcars.

20 4. The method of claim 3 wherein the railcars may be selected from the group consisting of box cars, flat cars, hopper cars, general purpose tank cars, open top hopper and gondola cars, plastic pellet cars, pressure differential cars and pressure tank cars.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the reports comprise information related to whether the rail equipment must be repaired or whether the rail equipment is useable in its present  
25 state.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the reports further comprise information related to whether the rail equipment is repairable by a mobile repair unit or whether the rail equipment must be shopped.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

30 printing blank forms relating to the rail equipment from the data entry system.

8. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:  
assigning a damage indicator for each part of the rail equipment; and  
inputting the damage indicator for each part of the rail equipment into the data entry system.
- 5 9. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:  
adding information into the data entry system relating to the inspector of the rail equipment.
10. The method of claim 1 wherein the information further comprises the identity of the rail equipment.
- 10 11. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:  
selecting a record of rail equipment from the databased;  
editing information on the record of the rail equipment; and  
saving the information to the database.
13. A data entry system for inputting information related to an inspection of railcar equipment comprising:  
15 means for inputting information relating to the type of rail equipment;  
means for inputting information relating to an identification of the rail equipment;  
means for inputting information relating to a condition of the rail equipment; and  
means for generating reports related to the information entered about the rail  
20 equipment.
- 14 13. The data entry system of claim 12 wherein the reports comprise information relating to an estimated cost of repair for the railcar equipment based on the information input relating to the condition of the railcar equipment.
- 15 14. The data entry system of claim 12 further comprising  
25 a database for storing the information input into the data entry system.
- 16 15. The data entry system of claim 12 further comprising:  
means for calculating an estimated total repair cost for the rail equipment.
- 17 16. The data entry system of claim 12 wherein the rail equipment is a railcar.
- 18 17. The data entry system of claim 12 wherein the information relating to the condition  
30 of the rail equipment indicates whether the rail equipment is damaged.

<sup>19</sup>  
18. The data entry system of claim 12 further comprising:  
means for printing blank forms for a plurality of types of rail equipment.

<sup>20</sup>  
19. The data entry system of claim 12 wherein the reports indicate whether the rail  
equipment is useable in its present form or whether the rail equipment needs repairs.

5 <sup>21</sup>  
~~20~~ The data entry system of claim 12 further comprising:  
means for saving the information and reports into a database.